5 Reasons Why I Don’t Celebrate Pride

I’m a gay Black man who used to enjoy the June festivities.But guess what, my Pride is not a Christmas tree.

June 14, 2019 By Aundaray Guess

June is Pride month. It’s a time for the LGBTQ community to enjoy their turn in the national spotlight. Also this year, the world celebrates the 50th anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall riot that is credited with helping launch the modern gay rights movement. As the nation show off its pride colors, I sit alone as I have a secret: I don’t like Pride month.

Before I’m asked to turn in my gay card, let me explain. While growing up, I never embraced Pride because of my own insecurities of accepting my sexuality. I would view from afar those who were comfortable to express themselves in public and live in their truth, as I hid in my tiny closet. As I got older and embraced who I am, my feelings of Pride started to shift as I was now able to align the pride I have for myself with the June happenings. I was now in a space to say out loud that I was a gay black man and didn’t care how anyone else felt about it.

Yet as I got older, the feelings I had about Pride started to shift again. I don’t say I hate Pride but I did start to fall out of love with it. As I look at what’s going on today I have good reasoning. To justify my feelings, these are the five reasons I don’t celebrate Pride.

Pride has lost its cause.

The original prides had context as it brought together people to rally for our cause. Like the riots of Stonewall, Pride was our time for the world to not only pay attention but also to make some changes. Sadly, it seemed that once gay marriage was approved, the gay community lost its steam or way. And also, to be frank, those whose interests were met with the passing of gay marriage found no need to stay in the fight to help others. There is still so much in the LGBTQ community that needs to be addressed, from trans rights to AIDS funding to global cases of countries not only denying the rights of gays but also killing their LGBT members.

Pride is too corporate.

Pride and its marches have turned into a very long corporate commercial. In essence, corporations have bought out Pride and placed themselves in the front, literally. In NYC, this has been a contentious issue that from it has created an off-shoot Pride in which corporations are not invited. At the same time, it also divides the community. Instead of coming together as a strong unit,

we've fallen into different camps. We have to stop allowing our Prides to be monetized and instead bring the community the Pride is meant for, back to the front.

Pride is not senior- or special-needs friendly.

Like other aspects of the LGBTQ community, gay elders are invisible as you find little to no inclusions for them either to be involved or invited. I've yet to see one advertisement in which someone over the age of 50 was looking back at me. This is also reflected in the scheduling of activities in which many are not conducive for seniors to be part of. Looking at many Pride marches, often the seniors, who should be first in the parade, are sometimes regulated to the back where they have to stand for hours just to begin marching. And for those with physical limitations, just simply forget about it as most events happen at places/venues that are not suitable for that community. An after-thought, if they are thought of at all.

We're suddenly visible.

It's interesting that in the month of June, everyone now sees us. From the media that run numerous stories of our lives to companies that sell rainbow gear, they see nothing but sales. Highlighting the media and this year's 50th recognition, at GRIOT Circle, I work with LGBTQ elders and since April we've been inundated with media requests. From an organization standpoint, this is good as it brings us publicity, but on a human level, I just know that after June 1st, the numerous media requests will disappear and we'll once again be invisible. We'll once again not have our stories told. What is really appalling is that the media are looking for trans elders, in which they want to highlight their contributions to Stonewall, yet since April numerous trans women, especially of color, have been murdered and the media don't tell their stories. And within the LGBTQ community itself, people of color remain invisible. That's why ethnic-specific Prides are still needed: because the overall LGBT community still doesn't want to address the racism that exists within.

My Pride is not a Christmas tree.

It seems to never fail that people approach the celebration of the LGBTQ life as if it's a Christmas tree that one puts back in storage when it's over. On July 1, the decorations come down, the celebrations and parties end, the rainbow lights are dismantled and everyone get on back with their lives. The lives of many in the LGBTQ community include increasing homophobia, attacks based on the current political environment, continuous murdering of trans lives, the rise of HIV/AIDS cases in rural and Southern areas and the homelessness of young LGBTQ youth who are disowned and forced out onto the street.

I understand Pride can't be an entity for everyone and everything and that we need to stop and celebrate even small victories. But I don't feel, especially knowing how Stonewall started and the movement it helped create, that Pride helps us retain the reason why we fight—a fight that is so important now that we have a political administration that shows its blatant hate of us. Until Pride comes around and addresses these issues, my love/hate relationship with Pride will continue and I'll simply hold out hope that next year I can show my Pride.

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